

**City of Falls Church
Citizens Advisory Committee on Transportation**

DATE: March 11, 2015

TO: Mayor Tarter and Members of the City Council

FROM: Citizens Advisory Committee on Transportation (CACT)

SUBJECT: Becoming a Walk Friendly Community

Introduction

The CACT's Annual Report, presented to Council on January 20, 2015, proposed the development of an action plan for the City to achieve the designation of Walk Friendly Community (WFC). Council requested information on the WFC program.

Background

The WFC designation is awarded to communities that have demonstrated a commitment to improving and sustaining walkability and pedestrian safety through comprehensive programs, plans, and policies. The Pedestrian and Bicycle Information Center of the University of North Carolina's Highway Safety Research Center administers the WFC program with funding from the U.S. Department of Transportation Federal Highway Administration.

The program recognizes communities at the Platinum, Gold, Silver, and Bronze levels. Fifty communities have been awarded the WFC designation and seventeen have received Honorable Mention. These include:

- Alexandria (Silver)
- Arlington (Gold)
- Charlottesville (Gold)
- Portsmouth, VA (Bronze)
- Reston (Honorable Mention)
- Washington, DC (Gold)

The Mobility for All Modes Transportation Chapter of the Comprehensive Plan lists "Earn Recognition as a Walk Friendly Community" as a Medium Term Policy Action.

Becoming a Walk Friendly Community

Application for WFC designation requires completion of a 62-page online “Community Assessment Tool” that evaluates community walkability and pedestrian safety through questions related to engineering, education, encouragement, enforcement, evaluation, and planning. Questions are intended to evaluate conditions for walking and provide ideas for promoting pedestrian activity and safety. Applicant communities receive detailed feedback on where and how they can improve as well as reference to other communities’ successful policies and programs.

The WFC website estimates that a multidisciplinary team of planners, engineers, law enforcement officials, and advocates will require 20-60 hours to complete the application. There is no cost to apply and applications are accepted twice each year: May-June and November-December.

Recommendation

As increasingly dense development pressures Falls Church’s existing transportation system, walking as a transportation mode has additional capacity and the ability to benefit City businesses and enliven our cultural life.

By pursuing WFC designation during this period of rapid growth, the City can attain national recognition and, more importantly, participate in a well-established program for improving walkability based on the plans, policies, and programs of the nation’s leading walk friendly communities.

The CACT recommends that the City initiate application to the WFC program as soon as possible, and offers its support and assistance in this effort.